

# تَرْبِيَّة



## Tarbiyyah

*from a talk given at:*  
The Islamic Study Center  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
2010/1431

*by*  
Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee

©  
2010/1431

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee  
Green Mountain School  
GreenMountainSchool.org  
313sand313@gmail.com

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

When we speak of *tarbiyyah* (تربّية) we must first speak of the term ‘*al-murrabi*’ (مربّي) in Arabic.<sup>1</sup>

The word *tarbiyyah* is derived from the root *rabb*, which means to foster, nourish and care for. A person who does this is called *al-murabbī* in Arabic. English unfortunately does not contain one all-embracing word by which we can translate this term. In Arabic, in the context of the *shaykh* or teacher, the reflection in this world of the Greatest Teacher, the Prophet ﷺ, is the one who nourishes, fosters, supports, advances, aids, encourages or trains the *murīd* by goodness and grace, in the Way of Allāh ﷻ. It comes from the same root as ‘*ar-rabb*’ which means, when referring to Allāh ﷻ, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, the One who gives life and sustenance to all. The word *ar-Rabb* (الرب), with the definite article ‘*al-*’, cannot be applied to anyone except Allāh ﷻ, but it may be used in conjunction with something else, in the genitive, e.g., *rabb al-māl* (the owner of the wealth), *rabb al-bayt* (the owner of the house) and so on. In its verbal form it is used when referring to the care the farmer takes to nurture his crops or, when referring to women, it means specifically the function of the mother in nourishing her child by feeding the child with the milk from her breasts. We may also think of it as meaning ‘The Trainer of Souls’; but we hope that it is understood that these are all facets of the term *al-murabbī*.

The first and greatest *murabbī* is the Prophet ﷺ, but after him the true *shuyukh* are the educators, trainers, fosterers — the *murabbī* of their *muridūn*. Were this not so they could not have connected their students to the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and the Way of ʾIslām.

As such, *tarbiyyah* is not a process of learning “*about*” ʾIslām but it *is* the process of learning to “*be*” a Muslim.

*Shaykh* ʾAbu-l-Ḥasan aṣh-Shādhḍhūlī ؒ said to Zakī-ud-dīn al-Aṣwānī, “Oh Zakī. Stick close to Abu-l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī ؒ. A bedouin who urinates on his own leg may come to him in the

---

1- See my essay *al Bayʿah* for more on the term *al-murabbī*

morning and by evening he has arrived<sup>2</sup> to knowledge of Allāh ﷻ.”

It was the custom of Sīdī Abu-l-°Abbās ؒ to thoroughly review and investigate (*tafaqqud*) his murīdūn in regard to their states (°*aḥwāl*), their inspirations (°*ilhām*) from Allāh ﷻ, and their intuitive insights (*firāsah*), by engaging them in discussion so as to check their understanding and progress. He used to say that the “Shuyukḥ should follow up their murīdūn.”

On one occasion he said to one of his followers, “Why have you left me?” and the murīd replied that, “Because of you I have no need of anyone.” To which the Shāykh said, “There is no one without the need of another. Sayyidinā °Abu Bakr ؓ, though he had the direct benefit of being with the Prophet ﷺ, did not come to be without need of him. Indeed he never left him for a single day.”

He also used to say, “A murīd must tell his shāykh what is on his mind.” His explanation for this was that the spiritual master (*al-°ustādh*) is like a doctor and the murīd is like his patient. The patient must make the doctor aware of his total condition and must not hide anything from his doctor if he expects to be cured. In truth the murīd who hides something from his shāykh is actually a stranger to his shāykh and is not really one with the shāykh.

Sīdī Ibn °Aṭā °Illāh as-Sakandari ؒ relates this story; “I once said to some friends of the Shāykh, ‘I wish that the Shāykh would give me some attention and put me in his thoughts.’ The Shāykh knew of this and when I went to visit him said, ‘Do not ask the Shāykh to place you in his thoughts but, rather, place the Shāykh in your thoughts.

‘To the degree that you do this, just to that degree will the Shāykh be with you.’ Then he said to me, ‘What you would like to be, by Allāh ﷻ. you will be.’”

---

2- Urine touching any part of the body completely vitiates one’s state of ritual purity and thus renders invalid any act of worship and so also precludes and degrades most voluntary acts of devotion. Most likely Shāykh °Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ used it in this context to signify a person who was both ignorant (*jahl*) and heedless or mindless (*ghaflah*).

The Shaykh was meticulous in recognising the human dignity (*al-karāmatu-l-ʿinsāniyyah*) of his muridūn. He was not like some of the shuyukh who leave their students waiting when they have come for a meeting. He said in this connection, “A murid comes to his shaykh in the state of great spiritual determination and urgent zeal (*himmah*). If the murid is made to wait his zeal may be dampened and his ardour (*himmah*) extinguished.”

A Shaykh should ask his murid about the truth of his claims and the nature of his limitations (*qāsirah*), for as long as he is a beginner, but must not continue in this way for too long. When the murid reaches maturity (*bulūgh*) it is not necessary for the Shaykh to ask him for proofs (*bayyinah*), for at that point the murid will have dropped his appetitive cravings (*wihām*).

Whenever the Shaykh finds the murid entering by himself<sup>3</sup> into the spiritual recitations (*al-ʿawrād*)<sup>4</sup> he should order the murid to cease. The Shaykh is keen on breaking the habits of immature aspirants to indulge themselves in deceptive illusion (*hawāham*) saying, “He who loves visibility (*aḍḥ-ḍḥahūr*) worships appearance. He who loves to be unknown (*khaḥfī*) worships hiddenness. But for the one who worships and is the slave of Allāh (*ʿabdullāh*) it is all one to him whether Allāh ﷻ causes him to appear or vanish.”

In order to help the muridūn to reject their own self indulgence he used to tell the story of how the Prophet ﷺ overheard ʿAbu Bakr ؓ reciting the Qurʾān in a low voice whilst at the same time, ʿUmar ؓ was reading in a loud voice.

The Prophet ﷺ asked ʿAbu Bakr ؓ why he was reciting in a low voice and received the answer that, “I have made myself heard to He to whom I am speaking.”

He then asked ʿUmar ؓ why he was reciting in a loud voice and received the reply, “In order to awaken the sleepers and drive away the *shayṭān*.”

---

3- without a direct order or permission from the Shaykh

4- pp 97-97 Introduction to *Orisons* and pp 269-274 of Arabic Text

“The Prophet ﷺ then said to ʿAbu Bakr رضي الله عنه, “Raise your voice a bit.” and said to ʿUmar رضي الله عنه, “Lower your voice a bit.”

The Shaykh said, “The Prophet ﷺ meant in this way to cause each of them to abandon their individual will (ʿirādah) and join them to his ﷺ own will.”

Following the practice of the Prophet ﷺ, the Shaykh seeks to bring his muridūn to the point where they abandon their self indulgence and illusions. If, for instance, he finds a murīd boasting (*fakhr*) of his asceticism (*zuhd*) and his dropping of concern or pre-occupation with the world (*isqāṭ at-ṭadbirāt*) he says, “My brother. You give the *dunyā* too much importance when you think it is something you must abstain (*zahadat*) from. It is less than you think.” It is important that the murīd understand certain things about both *al-fakīr* in the sense of boasting, bragging and false pride in one’s voluntary poverty (*fakhr*) or asceticism (*zuhd*), and *adh-dhahūr* in the sense of the love of appearance, visibility, pomp, conspicuousness, ostentation and general ‘show’. In truth these are fatal *shayṭānic* germs of self-worship and egotism.

There are those who believe that because they wear patched or rough clothing and eat or drink coarse or tasteless foods that they are by virtue of this behavior travelling on the Ṣufī Path. Indeed Shaykh Abu-l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī رضي الله عنه often found that there was this tendency among some of his own muridūn.

What was his view of this and what is the view of the School of ash-Shādhūlī in this matter?

Sīdī Ibn ʿAṭā ʿIllāh as-Sakandari رضي الله عنه writes, “The view of Shaykh Abu-l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī رضي الله عنه as well as that of his Shaykh, ʿAbu-l-Ḥasan رضي الله عنه, and his companions was that one should avoid any way of dressing that reveals the secret (*as-sirr*) of the one who is wearing the clothes. He who dresses unusually (*ābidah*) for the sake of being different is a pretender.”

Sīdī Abu-l-ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه makes clear the views of his Shaykh when he relates, “I once went to Shaykh ʿAbu-l-Ḥasan رضي الله عنه and I had it in mind to eat coarse food and wear rough clothing. The Shaykh told me, “Know Allāh ﷻ (ʿarif-illāh) and be as you like.”

Sīdī Abu-l-°Abbās ؓ also relates that, “A *faqīr*<sup>5</sup> (فقير) came to visit Shaykh °Abu-l-Ḥasan ؓ dressed in garments made from the uncured skins of sheep<sup>6</sup> .

When the Shaykh had finished his talk the man approached the Shaykh and took hold of his garments saying, “Allāh is not worshipped in such garments as yours.” The Shaykh, who was always very elegantly, though simply, dressed, in turn fingered the man’s garments and said,

“The clothes I am wearing say, ‘I am enriched by Allāh ﷻ.’ whereas what you wear calls out to all, ‘I am in need. Give me.’”

Sīdī Ibn °Aṭā °Illāh ؓ comments on this saying, “Please do not take it to mean that we are criticising those who dress poorly because they are poor. What we mean to say here is that it is not necessary to dress poorly in order to a Sūfī. Neither blame nor fame attach themselves to a person on account of their dress, be it rich or poor. What is important is that the person in the clothing be one from among those who seek perfection or do their best (*al-muḥsinūn*).

Allāh ﷻ says.

مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ

mā °ala-l-muḥsinīn min sabīl

There is no way against those who do the best.

(Sūrah at-Ṭawba 9:91)

Dressing in a subtle or genteel manner, eating appetizing foods, and drinking cool beverages are not subjects of blame or approbation as long as they are accompanied by gratitude (*shukr*) to Allāh ﷻ.

- 
- 5- *faqīr* = a poor man .because of the relationship between *sūf* (wool) and *Sūfī* many of the *fuqarā*<sup>°</sup> (both the real ones and the pretenders) dressed in woolen garments. In this case the *faqīr* seems to have taken it a bit far by dressing not just in wool but in the skin of the sheep and an uncured one at that.
- 6- because of the relationship between *suf* (wool) and *Sūfī* many of the *fuqarā*<sup>°</sup> (both the real ones and the pretenders) dressed in woolen garments. In this case the *faqīr* seems to have taken it a bit far by dressing not just in wool but in the uncured skin of a sheep.

There is a story of how, one day in Ramaḍān, Sīdī Abu-l-<sup>°</sup>Abbās ؓ came to his Shaykh ؓ with the intention of breaking his fast at the end of a hot day with water from a skin.<sup>7</sup> The Shaykh ؓ said to him, “Make the water cool, my son. When you drink warm water and say ‘Praise Allāh (*alḥamdulillāh*)’<sup>8</sup>, you say it out of obligation, but when you drink cold water and say ‘*alḥamdulillāh!*’ every organ of your body responds to Allāh ﷻ with gratitude and thanks.”

This can be understood from the Words of Allāh ﷻ on the tongue of the Prophet Mūsā ؑ (Moses) after he had watered the sheep of the two daughters of Nabi Shu‘aib (Jethro) ؑ in Madyan.

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

fa-saqā lahuma  
tḥumma tawallā ila-ḍḥ-ḍhilli  
fa-qāla rabbi  
°innī li-māā °aṇzalata °ilayya  
mañ kḥarin faqīr

So he watered [their sheep] for the two of them  
and then he turned aside into the shade and said,  
‘My Lord,  
whatever good which you may send down on me,  
I am in need.’  
(Sūrah Qasas 28:24)

See how, after exerting himself, he then retired to a shady place and thanked Allāh ﷻ for it; thankful for any goodness which Allāh ﷻ cared to provide, down to the level of a shady place in which to sit.

Concerning *aḍḥ-ḍḥahūr*, by which is meant the love of appearance, visibility, pomp, ostentation and general ‘show’, there are a number of different facets which the murīd must consider and examine, especially insofar as they relate to one’s own self.

7- which would be roughly like tap water on a hot day

8- What one always says on finishing a meal or drinking the last drop of a cup.



One example of this can be found in the showing of excessive passion in the midst of circles of *as-samāʿ*<sup>9</sup> (سماء). It is a phenomenon usually observed in beginners (*al-mubtadʿīn*) and the people of states (*al-ʿahwāl*) rather than those of stations (*al-maqamāt*). Sīdī Abu-l-ʿAbbās ؒ used to say in this context,

“The perfected man (*al-ʿinsanu-l-kāmil*) is the one who controls his state (*al-ḥāl*).” He also said that, “There is a worshipper (*ʿabd*) who is in his state by his state and there is a worshipper (*ʿabd*) who is in his state by the Giver of the State. He who is in his state by his state is the slave of his state (*ʿabdu-l-ḥāl*). He who is in his state by the Giver of the State is the Slave of the Giver of States (*ʿabdu-l-muḥawwil*). He that is in his state by his state will be saddened when it passes and lament its leaving, whereas he that is in his state by the Giver of the State will neither rejoice nor lament in either the coming or the going of a state, knowing full well that all and everything is coming from the Giver.”

Sīdī Ibn ʿAṭā ʿIllāh ؒ explained this by saying, “The one who is witness to Allāh ؒ has everything and no thing has him.

“The state is under His control and domination (*qahar*). This can only be realised by the mature (*ar-rajāl*) due to the depth of knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) of Allāh ؒ, for knowledge rules over state (*wa-l-ʿilmu ḥākimun ʿala ḥal*). Knowledge is weight (*wazn*) and equilibrium (*mizān*). States are concomitant and circumstantial<sup>10</sup> branches of knowledge. Knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) is in itself abiding (*qāra*) and unshakable (*thābit*) but state (*ḥal*) has no permanent existence. In this connection it is said,

Because you are changing you are called a state.

Everything that changes vanishes.

Observe the shadow.

When it reaches its greatest length it disappears.”

9- literally hearing or audition. These are gatherings where people listen and recite Qurʾān, Dhikr, Qasāʾid, or sometimes even poetry.

10- *faraʿ min farūʿ* = branches of branches or tributaries of tributaries

The ʿawliyā karām ﷺ rule their states by Allāh ﷻ, for it is He ﷻ who has made them to be Masters of the States.

ʿImām al-Junayd ؒ, was asked why some of the shuyukḥ were to be seen moving when they attended the *samāʿ* and he to the contrary was not moving but stationary and fixed. He replied, using the Words of Allāh, the Most High:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ

wa tara-l-jibāla taḥsabuhā jāmidatñw-  
wa hiya tamurru marra-s-saḥābā

...and you shall see the mountains that you suppose are fixed  
and they are flying like the clouds...

(Sūrah an-Naml 28:88)

Another of the ʿawliyā karām ؒ was asked, “Why do you not move in the *samāʿ*?” and he replied, “I do not move for there may be that there is someone of a more elevated rank present than I amongst the gathering. Out of respect I hold my emotions. But when I am alone (*kḥalwat*) I let them flow.”

And the Shaykh said, “See how the reins of emotion were thus firmly held; thus he holds fast when he likes and lets go when he wills. So in a like fashion when the heart (*al-qalb*) is expanded by the spiritual knowledge of Allāh ﷻ (*bi-maʿrifatu-llāh*) it is capable of containing the incoming inspirations and intuitive perceptions (*al-wāradat*). The effect of a state shows only on he who is incapable of containing it. The knower by Allāh ﷻ alone is capable of containing the spiritual knowledge (*al-maʿarifah*).”

In this same context it is often said that, “The man of state is like a stream or a river. When the rain of spiritual knowledge (*maʿrifah*) descends, the river overflows its banks and floods the land. Or if the *wāradat* descend upon him he is drowned (*gharīq*) in his *maʿarifah*.

“The man of station (*maqām*) and dwelling (*manzil*) is, however, like the ocean. When the rain of knowledge descends he contains and absorbs it, for have you ever seen an ocean flooded by rain?”

This understanding may help to explain why the really great Ṣūfis are seldom known, and if they are known are not really understood, whilst the people with conspicuous states are more usually known due to the appearance (*dhāhir*) upon them of those states. They are too weak to bear them and not disciplined enough to control them. In truth they are without any real spiritual science (*‘ilm*) or knowledge (*ma‘arifah*). The man of *ḥāl* may be more greatly acclaimed than the man of *maqām* but the distance between them is greater than that which exists between the earth and the heavens.

We can safely say, and indeed it is well known to those who know, that insofar as a being is confirmed in the Divine Science (*al-‘ulūm-ul-ilahiyah*) and the Lordly Knowledge (*al-ma‘arifatu-r-rabbāniyyah*) this being will be a stranger (*‘istighrāb*) to this world (*ad-dunyā*) and few will be those who know him, and of those who do come to know him, most will leave him.<sup>11</sup> Sīdī Abu-l-‘Abbās ؒ says, “A walī will not arrive (*yaṣal*) to Allāh ؒ until he cuts off (*tanqat*<sup>°</sup>) his passion to arrive (*wuṣūl*).”

°Imām aṣḥ-Ṣḥaranī ؒ says what is meant in this instance is, “Cutting off (*anqaṭā*<sup>°</sup>)<sup>12</sup> with politeness (*‘adab*) and not cutting off because one is fed-up or without hope. Cutting off because surrender has mastered one’s heart which is the contentment (*riḍā*) of Allāh ؒ upon him.” And Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ says, “A walī will not arrive to Allāh ؒ until the passion (*aṣḥ-shawāh*) of his passions, the planning (*at-tadbīr*) of his planning and the perfidy (*al-kḥatra*) of his treachery are all dead.”

Shaykh °ibn °Aṭā°Illāh ؒ commented on this, saying, “The Shaykh means that the ceasing shall be a ceasing in politeness and not in despair because the surrender (*‘itislām*) to Allāh— and through that surrender to, and acceptance of, the choices made for one by Allāh ؒ and the subsequent witnessing of the reality that it is Allāh ؒ who truly is the Best of Choosers — is the true beginning of one’s resignation and absolute submission to Allāh ؒ.

11- See al-Qur’ān – Chapter of the Cave (al-Kahf 18:60-82)

12- *qaṭā‘a* = to cut off, to chip off, to amputate, to cut through, to sunder, to disjoin, to sever (relations), to break off a (friendship), also to ford a river, to surmount an obstacle, to make a great effort or to use up completely.

“We have composed a short poem on this which was included in our book, *Light on the Dropping of Self-Direction*, (*at-Tanwīr fī-’Isqaṭ at-Tadbīr* – translation published by Noon Hierographers)

Be His slave and leave your reins in His Hand.

Never plan for it will not succeed.

Do you presume to plan when it is Allāh who is the Planner?

Will you resist the Judgement of Allāh?

The annihilation (*fanā’*) of will and planning  
is the ultimate goal if only you will understand.

This is the Road our ancestors travelled and they arrived.

If you would be successful then travel in their footsteps.”

No doubt Shaykh ‘ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh ﷺ wanted to say that the resolution of the heart (*jazmu-l-qalb*) and the certainty of the self (*at-tīnqinu-n-nafs*) are themselves a commitment (*tafwīd*) to Allāh ﷻ, for beyond the planning of Allāh ﷻ there is, in Reality (*ḥaqīqah*), (*حقيقة*) no planning nor are there any plans in Truth but His Plans and beyond His Will there is no other.

That we can say this does not mean, however, that we are contradicting the subservience (*’istakḥadḥa*) to causality (*al-’asbāb*), for Allāh Most High says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ

yāā ’ayyuha-l-ladḥīna ’āmanu khudū ḥidḥrakum

Oh you who believe, take your precautions!

(Sūrah-an-Nisāā° 4:71)

and in like manner Allāh ﷻ has also told us:

اعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

’a°iddū lahum-ma-s-taṭa°tum min quwwah

Make ready for them all you can of power!

(Sūrah al-°Anfāl 8:60)

The Prophet ﷺ always used to prepare carefully yet at the same time he submitted all stages of his planning — before, during, and after — to Allāh ﷻ, trusting in Him and in Him alone and knowing that it is Allāh ﷻ Who, as we are reminded on numerous occasions in the the Qurʾān, has the power over all things.<sup>13</sup>

It is this sure and certain knowledge that it is Allāh ﷻ who truly has power over all things that leads us to understand our real position in the scheme of things which has the tendency to deflate titanism in thought and, in general, the avoidance of feelings of false powers or authority. Those who know make full submission to Allāh for in the beginning and the end it is He Who will bring about the final outcome. Sīdī Abu-l-ʿAbbās ؒ was very keen to instill this understanding in the minds and hearts of his muridūn. It was in this context he told the following story about one Samnūn who had gotten a bit carried away and in the course of his supplications (*duʿāʾ*) boldly cried out to Allāh ﷻ,

“I have no choice but You. Test me however You want!”

Shortly thereafter he found that his ability to urinate has ceased. He was patient at the beginning but soon began to complain and went around saying,

“Make *duʿāʾ* to Allāh ﷻ for your lying uncle!”

The Ṣhaykh said, “It would have been wiser if Samnūn had said,

“I have no choice but you. Forgive me in any way you like!”

Samnūn was tested by his own pride (*al-ʾiktibar*). Had he said,

“Support me with Your Power  
and then test me in any way you like.”

that also might have been possible.

In this sense Sīdī Abu-l-ʿAbbās ؒ often said to his muridūn, “If you are asked, ‘Do you fear Allāh?’ say, ‘Yes, in so far as He has created fear in me.’ Similarly when you are asked, ‘Do you love Him?’ answer, ‘Yes! In so far as He has created love of Him in me.’

13- this phrase is repeated many times throughout the Qurʾān, as for instance 2:20, 2:109, 2:148, 2:259, 2:284, et seq

“He that takes this approach will be tested on his reliance upon Allāh ﷺ and not on his own power.

“It is written, ‘Every pretender will be tested!’”

He used to also speak to his students, the muridūn, about the way in which his Shaykh had nurtured him, saying,

“I once went to Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ and he said, ‘If you want to be my friend then do not ask anyone for anything. If something comes to you without asking do not take it.’ I thought to myself, ‘But the Prophet ﷺ used to accept presents and he ؐ said, “What comes to you without asking then take it.”’ Immediately the Shaykh said to me, ‘It seems you are thinking that the Prophet ﷺ said, “What comes to you without asking then take it.” But then you should consider how Allāh ﷻ described His Messenger ﷺ,

قَدْ إِنَّمَا أَنْذَرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ

qul °innamāa °undhirukum bi-l-wahī

Say, ‘I warn you by The Revelation

(Sūrah al-°Anbiyāa° 21:45)

‘What has Allāh ﷻ given you of Revelation (*al-wahī*)? If you follow the Prophet ﷺ in anything then let it be in giving. He never took anything from anybody without rewarding them in return. If your self (*nafs*) have been thus purified (*taharat*) and sanctified (*taqadasat*) then you too may accept presents. Otherwise don’t.”

Another story in line with these is one related by the pious Shaykh Yaqūt al-°Arsh<sup>14</sup> who told it in al-°Iskandariyah in the year 715 of the Hijrah.

14- also known as Yaqūt al-Habashī q who, along with °Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh q was a khalifah of Sidi Mursī °Abu-l-°Abbās q. His resting place, may Allāh perfume it, is in al-Iskandariya only a few hundred meters from that of Sidi al-Mursī q. He was purchased as a slave by Sidi Mursī °Abu-l-°Abbās q on the orders of Shaykh °Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ. Sidi Yaqūt al-Habashī ؒ became his personal attendant. Later the Shaykh freed him and arranged for him to marry his daughter. He is the founder of the branch of the Shādhḍuliyah known as al-Hana°yah which adheres most closely to the original oral teachings of Shaykh °Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ. See page 58 of the *Introduction to the Orisons*.

“I was praying in one of the masājīd on the outskirts of al-ʿIskandariyyah and I had been staying there for several days. After some time I felt hungry and I entered the city with the intention of visiting the Shaykh. On the way I found a dirham on the street and decided to buy some staples<sup>15</sup>. In the market (*as-sūqq*) I saw some beautiful sultanas (*zabibā*), and since the Shaykh was from al-ʿAndalūs and sultanas grow there in abundance I decided to buy them.

“I bought them but didn’t eat any for myself as I preferred the Shaykh above myself and had decided to keep them for him. When I went to him I found him sitting in the old zawīyya in the sea wall where he had lived with Shaykh ʿAbu-l-Ḥasan. I placed the sultanas before him and stayed with him for some time. When I thought it was time to leave I got up to go, whereupon he said, ‘Sit down!’ Then a man came in with a roast sheep and five loaves of bread.

“The Shaykh said, ‘Eat! This is your reward for having preferred me above your self when it was you who was hungry.’ I ate all by myself until my stomach was quite full. Then he ordered that the rest of the fuqarāʾ come in to eat. When they were eating he handed me the sultanas and said to me, “Take these and give them away (*sadaqah*). We are not allowed to eat from gleanings (*al-laqaṭah*).”

He also used to say along the same lines, “He that buys oil from the grocer and asks him to increase it by one drop will find that his dīn is a tiny as that one drop. He that buys charcoal and asks the seller to increase it by a single piece will find that his heart is blacker than that one piece of charcoal.”

He agreed with Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan ʿ on the measure of scaling the truthfulness of the murīd. He said,

“He that is confirmed by Allāh ʿ as His Friend (*walī*) will not hate death. This is the scale for the muridūn by which they may measure themselves. If they imagine themselves to be from the ʿawliyā karām ʿ the nafs craves to be in higher stations without travelling on the path that leads to them. Allāh ʿ says,

---

15- kḥubzan wa ʿidman = bread and that which is eaten with it.

فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

fa-tamannawa-l-mowta 'in kunțum ṣādiqīn

Wish for death if you are honest!

(Sūrah al-Baqara 2:94)

The Ṣaykh did not neglect mentioning the virtues (*fadā'il*) the murīd should adopt and by which they might test their own truthfulness in the application of these virtues in the day-to-day of one's life. In this context my Ṣaykh said to me, "Do not accompany any one except that you note these virtues are present.

"They are generous even though they may be poor.

They forgive the offences of others.

They are patient and steadfast in the midst of difficulties.

They are content with what Allāh ﷻ decides (*qadīya*)."

In concluding this section we would like to quote some of the directives given by Sīdī 'ibn 'Aṭā'illāh ﷺ, for it was he, more than any other, who gathered together the teaching of his Ṣaykh, Sīdī 'Abu-l-'Abbās ﷺ and the Ṣaykh of his Ṣaykh, Sīdī 'Abū-l-Ḥaṣan aṣḥ-Ṣhādhḍulī ﷺ.

Sīdī 'ibn 'Aṭā'illāh ﷺ said, "I hear him (Sīdī Mursī ﷺ) saying, 'I would like to have a manuscript<sup>16</sup> of the book *at-Taḥṭīb*<sup>17</sup> which was sent to my son Jamalu-d-dīn.'

I went and copied it without telling the Ṣaykh and when I had finished copying it I brought it to him. He asked, 'What is this?' and I replied that it was a 'copy of *at-Taḥṭīb* which I have copied for you.' He took it and said to me,

"Bear in mind that no one gives the *walī* anything. 'Inshā'Allāh you will find the reward for this on your balance (*mizān*) sheet (on the Day of Judgment)."

16- here he means literally a handwritten (*manu script*) copy. This was prior to the late 19th century (ce) advent of moveable type in the Arab world.

17- a well known and concise reference book of *Fiqh*.



“When I brought him a copy of the second volume one of his friends met me and said, “By Allāh! I shall make him an eye<sup>18</sup> of the Eyes of Allāh who will be followed in both the realm of the outer (*ḍḥāhiri*) and the inner (*bāṭinī*) knowledge.’

“When, finally, I brought him a copy of the third volume I left it and one of his companions met me and said, “I was with the Shaykh and I found him (reading) a red book and he said, ‘This book has been copied for me by ʿibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh. By Allāh I shall not be content until I see him sitting in the seat of his grandfather<sup>19</sup> but by an abundance of ṭaṣawwuf.”

“One of his companions told me that the Shaykh once said, “When ʿibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, the Alexandrian faqīh, comes, bring him in to see me.’ When I arrived they informed the Shaykh and he said, ‘Come closer to me,’ until I was sitting directly in front of him, whereupon he said, ‘Jibrīl ﷺ, once came to the Prophet ﷺ, and with him there was another angel who had been ordered (by Allāh ﷻ) to make the people of aṭ-Ṭaʾif<sup>20</sup> obey the words of the Messenger ﷺ. The Angel of the Mountains (*maliku-l-jibāl*) greeted him with peace and said, ‘Oh Muḥammad. I can cause the mountains to close in on them.’

“The Mesenger ﷺ, said, ‘No. I pray to Allāh ﷻ that some of their descendents will accept the Tawḥīd<sup>21</sup> of Allāh ﷻ and avoid associating partners (*yashrik*) with Allāh ﷻ.

“Thus the Prophet ﷺ patiently endured their oppression and some of their descendants did become believers and just so we have endured the old *faqīh* (his grandfather who was rather testy) with patience out of love of this young *faqīh* (meaning ʿibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh).”

---

18- he is referring to the well known Ḥadīth al-Qudsī concerning the ʿawliyā l where Allāh ﷻ, speaking on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ, mentions that “When I love a slave of mine I become the hand by which he gasps, the eye by which he sees, the feet by which he walks” etc.

19- a well known and pious (though often contentious) faqīh of the Malikī school in al-ʿIskandariyah. See *Book Three* and pp 51-52 *Introduction to Orisons*.

20- See my essay on *Bayʿah* for the full details of this.

21- *tawḥīd* = oneness, from *waḥada* or *ʿahad* = one. By extension, the Doctrine of the Absolute Singularity of Allāh u.

Sīdī Jamalu-d-dīn, the son of the Shaykh, said to me, “I told the Shaykh that they want to put ʾibn ʿAṭāʾ-illāh in the Chair of Fiqh.” The Shaykh said to me, ‘Let them place him on the Chair of Fiqh — I shall place him on the Chair of Taṣawwuf.’ I saw him later and he said to me, ‘When the Faqīh Naṣru-d-dīn<sup>22</sup> recovers he will put you on your grandfather’s Chair. After he will sit by your side and I will sit on your other side and then you will speak from the two branches (the outer and the inner, *adḥ-ḍḥahir wa-l-bāṭin*) of knowledge (*al-ʿilm*).’ His words were fulfilled ﷺ.”

“One day I left the Faqīh Makīnu-d-dīn al-ʾAsmar and I met up with ʾAbu-l-Ḥasan al-Jarīrī ﷺ. He greeted me with a smile and I asked him, ‘How do you know me?’ He replied, ‘How can I not know you? Once I was sitting with Shaykh ʾAbu-l-ʿAbbās ﷺ and you were present. When you left the Shaykh said, ‘I like that young man. Some of our companions do not show up but this young man is always present.’ Shaykh ʾAbu-l-ʿAbbās ﷺ said, ‘This young man will not die until he becomes a Caller (*daʿī*) to Allāh ﷻ. And again what the Shaykh ﷺ said came to pass, *al-ḥamdu-li-llāh*.

“This is a duʿāʾ of the Shaykh to counter suspicion, doubt and the whisperings of shayṭān.

سوبحان المالك الخالق، إن يشأ يذهبكم  
و يأت جديد، و ما ذلك على الله بعزیز

subāḥāna-l-māliku-kḥaliqā •  
ʾiñy-yashāʾ yadḥhabukum • wa yaʿti jadīdā •  
wa mā ḍḥalika ʿaka-llāhu bi-ʿaziz •

Praise be to the King of Creation

If he wishes He will banish you and bring a new (creation)  
That is not difficult for Allāh the Almighty.

“I once composed a poem in praise of the Shaykh ﷺ. After I recited it to him he said, May Allāh ﷻ support you with the Holy Spirit (*bi-rūḥi-l-quḍs*).”

22- The Chief Maliki *faqīh* in al-ʾIskandayiah at that time

“I also composed another poem at his request. This poem was in response to a poem written by a man from °Aḥmīm. When I read it to him he said,

“When this *faqīh* (Sīdī °ibn °Aṭā°Illāh ﷺ) came to me he had two sicknesses. Allāh ﷻ has relieved him of both of them. Now he will sit and speak with two knowledges.” Here the Ṣhaykh was referring to the sickness of the whisperings (*al-waswasah*) of *shayṭān* and my doubts. These both left me by the *barakah* of the Ṣhaykh. The other sickness was an intense pain in my head for which he made *du°ā°* and Allāh ﷻ cured me.”

“One night I went to sleep in distress. I saw the Ṣhaykh in a veridical dream (*ru°yah*) and I complained to him.

“He said, ‘Be quiet (°iskut). By Allāh I shall teach you a great knowledge (°ilman °aḍḥimā).’ When I awoke I went to the Ṣhaykh and told him my *ru°yah* and he said, ‘So it will be, °inshā°Allāh.’”

“The Ṣhaykh ﷺ came back from a trip and we went to meet him. After I greeted him he said, ‘Oh °Abu Aḥmad. May Allāh ﷻ be for you and be tender (*luṭf*) with you and put you on the Way of His Friends (°awliyā°ahu) and make you respected among His Beings.’”

“I realised the *barakah* of his *du°ā°* and I knew that I could never leave the people because of his asking that Allāh ﷻ might cause me to be ‘respected among His Beings.’”

We have selected the above quotes from here and there in order to show the relation between the Ṣhaykh ﷺ and Sīdī °ibn °Aṭā°Illāh ﷺ so that the reader might have an idea of the taste of the relation between a ṣhaykh and his murīd. In closing we mention four things about Ṣhaykh °Abu-l-°Abbās as an example (*mithāl*) of the complete fosterer, educator, nourisher and trainer (*murabbī*).

- It was the custom of Sīdī °Abu-l-°Abbās ﷺ to thoroughly review and investigate (*tafaqqud*) his *muridīn* in regard to their states (*aḥwāl*), their inspirations (°ilhām) from Allāh ﷻ and their intuitive insights (*firāsah*) by engaging them in discussion so as to check their understanding and progress. He used to say that the “ṣhuyukḥ should follow up their murīdūn”.

- He encouraged his muridūn to give up, reject and finally transcend their own likes and dislikes in favour of the likes and dislikes of Allāh ﷻ in terms of what He has prescribed for us.
- He endeavored to remove from his muridūn any desire to show off or be visible (*aḍḥ-ḍḥuhūr*) either by putting on outer signs in the form of outer clothing or by internal boastfulness as to their imagined degree of asceticism (*zuhd*).
- He directed his muridūn to turn their minds and hearts from the ordinary to the sublime.
- His method married the general and the specific. Thus while he spoke of the overall sickness of the time he also cured each of his students of their specific sickness.



Most of that which preceeds this was from our translation of the “*Madrassah Shādhḍḥuyliya*” (The School of the Shādhḍḥuliya) by Shaykh ʿAbdu-l Ḥalīm Maḥmud ﷺ (Shaykh of al-Azhar in the mid-1900’s), from the section devoted to the teachings of Shaykh, ʿAbu-l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī ﷺ in the chapter, “The Trainer of Souls”. The complete translation of the first two parts of “*Madrassah Shādhḍḥuyliya*” in un-edited typescript printed under the title, “*Origins*” is available at the [GreenMountainSchool.Org](http://GreenMountainSchool.Org) website.

I believe this chapter very clearly lays out the basic principles behind the subject of *tarbiyyah* though there are still a few things that should be understood in regards to the subject.

The outer form of the *tarbiyyah* proceeds, usually, through the shaykh assigning the *murīd* certain ‘tasks’, some of which may seem mundane and the value of which may not be readily apparent to the *murīd*. These ‘tasks’ are, however, a major way in which the *murīd* learns to bring his will into accord with that of the shaykh.

The murīd should have implicit faith in his shaykh to the extent that he believes that in all the world there is no one to his knowledge who can benefit him more than his shaykh.

In the terminology of ṭasawwūf this conception of implicit faith in the shaykh is known as *wahdat-e-maṭlab* or holding firm. Without holding firm to one's shaykh, the act of bay'ah is meaningless and of no benefit, as compatibility (*munāsabāt*) (مناسبات) with the shaykh is an essential condition for reformation (*ʿiṣlāḥ*) (إصلاح) of the nafs.

The sign of the existence of compatibility (*munāsabāt*) between the murīd and his shaykh is that the heart of the murīd does not object to the statements and acts of the shaykh nor does he speculate about the shaykh's judgements. A bond of sincerity (*kḥulūs*) is generated between seeker and sought (*murīd wa murād*) (مرید و مراد). In their mutuality the shaykh considers the murīd to be his and the murīd considers the shaykh to be his and there is no friction or discord between them. Should any objection arise in the heart regarding the shaykh, the murīd should grieve and feel remorse.

This time is often referred to as the time of “breaking your legs” and demands that the murīd spend as much time as possible with the shaykh, carefully observing him in all his states and faithfully carrying out the various ‘jobs’ or ‘tasks’ the shaykh assigns.

The murīd must actively commit himself to the shaykh and his teachings with a clean heart, clear mind, focus and total commitment. Obviously a murīd who has entered into the relationship of the *bay'ah* but who does not follow up on that *bay'ah* in terms of investment of time and service will not, in most cases, benefit to the same degree as the murīd who fully gives of himself to the shaykh, his teachings and the various tasks to which he is assigned.

At the very least the murīd should arrange to spend time with the shaykh if only for the weekly *majlis*. Ideally he should seek further contact with the shaykh for training (*tarbiyyah*), for it is this training, along with adherence on the part of the murīd to the Laws of Allāh, both outer and inner, (*ʿāḥkamu-l-dhāhirah wa ʿāḥkamu-l-baṭiniyyah*), that brings about *tazkiyyah* or purification of the self.

In considering the subject of ‘tasks’ and jobs’, let me relate a few examples from my own knowledge and experience.

Many years ago I was travelling with one my teachers of *tabaraka*, that is, a man who was not my initiating shaykh but one with whom I travelled or studied for the purpose of gaining particular teachings.

This man, Syed Habib Omar Abdallah ﷺ, from the Comoros, was an ambassador for many years, as well as a professor of biology and an advisor to the president of Tanzania, master of da‘wah (دعوة) and a shaykh of the Ba Alawi school, albeit in a somewhat hidden way.

He and I were, on the surface, involved in fundraising for an Islamic school in the US and were travelling mainly in Arabian Peninsula including Gulf States, many of whose rulers and ministers he knew on a first name basis from his years as ambassador.

Our ‘work’ took us from one country to another and in and out of airports, hotels, ministries, businesses and homes of wealthy donors.

He had all the contacts and my ‘job’ was to make sure that everything went smoothly which, due to the extremely fluid circumstances in which all these various events took place and schedules permitted, demanded a great deal of flexibility on every level.

Functionally this meant that in one day we might book and re-book and then re-book again airline reservations, hotel accommodations, appointments, dining arrangements and so forth.

In the course of making all these changes I noticed that not only did he know the various rulers and ministers, but all kinds of airline representatives and ticket salespeople as well as the workers in different parts of the airport itself and the same in the hotels with concierge, reservation desk and ticket people, luggage handlers, bell captains and, even, individual bell boys, taxi drivers, limousine drivers, restaurant maitre d’s, wait staff as well as policemen, passport stampers, immigration officers and so on, many of whose names he knew and many of whom would invite us to their homes, so that often we would wind up spending the night not in the five star hotel that had been laid on but in the house of, for instance, the door man at that very same hotel who was, in reality, a hidden *walī*.

After some time travelling together he began to assign me various ‘tasks’ which involved my interactions with many classes and types of people while insisting I ‘work’ in an extremely fluid fashion which accomodated multiple changes, at the same time making all of our prayers and often, after a stultifying evening with various ‘Gulfi’ movers and shakers trying to raise funds for a classroom or for the yearly salary of a teacher or a school janitor, leaving with the driver of one of the ‘shakers’ to get to a late night *dhikr*.

Ask yourself, what was the training here?

With another teacher with whom I travelled early on my way, I was given tasks that centered around buying and distributing hundreds of loaves of bread for the homeless poor and lepers on a daily basis which was part of his ‘activities’. The buying of this bread was one thing but the distribution of the many loaves of bread quite another. I found myself alternating between very wealthy and often avaricious food merchants (this was in a so-called third-world country) on one hand, and the poorest of the poor and sickest of the sick on the other hand, often moving between the rich merchants and the poor lepers in the course of a few hours.

Again ask yourself what was the training involved in this ‘work’?

In another instance my ‘job’ was to oversee the feeding of some 200 people three meals daily and ‘on time’ high up in the mountains with the only means of supplying food being a very reluctant mule and the operators of a ski lift who, when the mule was too recalcitrant, we were sometimes able to cajole (in French) to take our food stuffs up when the skiers and day trippers had all gone up the mountain and there were empty cabins on the Téléphérique.

What was the training involved here?

Another part of my own training or tarbiyyah took place in sitting, often for many long hours, with my late shaykh, Dr. Ibrahim al-Batawī رحمه الله, who in addition to being a professor of Islamic studies (mainly the work of ʿImām al-Ghazali رحمه الله) was also a titular village shaykh who was often called upon to sort out marriages, divorces or inheritances for the people of the village and also residents of Cairo.

Such ‘work’ is extremely time-consuming and also demands a very level and patient ‘head’ as the people involved are often extremely emotional and, especially in the case of inheritance, very involved in getting all they can and never mind who doesn’t like it.

Here the ‘job’ is to sit with the shaykh (keeping quiet yourself) and watch, and learn, how he both puts together and takes apart the most intricate interpersonal affairs often accompanied with much yelling, weeping, protestations and often terrible threats and bad language..

Or another example I relate from the experience of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal ﷺ who, when his first teacher in Palestine had taken him as far as he could, took him in turn to his own teacher in Damascus for ‘higher studies’ in order to ‘cook him’.

The teacher gave him the ‘job’ for three years of arranging the shoes and sandals of the fuqara’, never allowing him once to enter the zawiyya and limiting his lessons to what he could get sitting outside the door of the zawiyya with the shoes and the sandals.

One final example of tarbiyyah.

There was a shaykh in Central Asia who had a murīd who had completed his Islamic Studies and had become a *mullah* responsible for the weekly sermon (*kḥutbah*) and various duties in the community having to do with what is called “weddings, divorces and funerals”.

The murīd, however, in the course of his ṣufic practices, became drunk on G-d (*jadḥb*) and had become what is known as a *majdhūb*.

Now being a *majdhūb* and being a *kḥatīb* do not really go well together and the poor man was in a very conflicted state when his shaykh ordered him to leave the masjid where he was and go to a far off town and take up his duties as *kḥatīb* in that town. The murīd protested he was too far gone in Allāh ﷻ but the shaykh insisted.

When he reached the town, following the instructions of his shaykh, he began once again to preach and take care of weddings, divorces, and funerals but one day on the pulpit (*mimbar*) he was once again overtaken by his *jadḥb*, with the result that the occupants of the town threw him off the *mimbar* and drove him out of town.



He returned to the shaykh, but the shaykh sent him back, and this time the people would not even let him into the masjid so he began to preach and call to Allāh ﷻ in the streets until he was overcome again by *jadhb* and the people rose up and threw him out again.

He returned to the shaykh, but again the shaykh sent him back, and this time the people would not even let him in the town and bolted the gates of the city against him.

In despair he went to the top of a hill outside the town and, leaning on a tree, wept. As he began to weep the earth quaked and before his eyes the town was flattened and everyone was killed.

Seeing this, the man fell dead from a heart attack and, simultaneously, the shaykh, aware of events, ordered one of the other murīds to go to that town, some forty days by donkey, and bury him.

The murīd reached the town and found, just where and just as the shaykh had said, the body of the *majdhūb khatīb* at the base of the tree — dead. Following the orders of the shaykh who told him to bring a shovel and a winding sheet (*kāfun*), he set out to bury him.

He prepared the body, dug the grave, and as he was getting ready to offer the prayers for the dead (*ṣalātu-l-janazah*), he saw in the distance a man galloping on horseback. Since this was a Muslim land he knew the man was a Muslim and waved him to come so there would be more than one person to offer the *ṣalātu-l-janazah*.

The man arrived fully swathed in a cloak, as he had been riding in the desert, and dismounting from his horse came, so the other murīd thought, to assist him in the *ṣalātu-l-janazah*.

As he stood beneath the tree over the wrapped-up corpse of the dead man he threw off his *pato* or cloak. The *murīd* noticed to his great surprise that the horseman was the dead *mullah* who spoke, saying,

“What you see in that shroud is my *fanā*° (فناء) (extinction) and what you see standing here is my *baqā*° (بقاء)” or the state where a man, unconcerned about his rewards or position in this world, returns to his true abiding existence and Allāh ﷻ appoints him to guide the people. This, of course, was the reason the shaykh had sent him.

Again, all of what we have related concerning ‘jobs’ and ‘tasks’ refers mainly to the outer more readily observable form of tarbiyyah.



At the beginning the heart is a learner and the tongue is a teacher.

A large part of our teaching comes under the rubric of what I term, ‘Sonic Theology’, which stems mainly from the reading in *tartīl* (ترتيل) and by *tajwīd* (تجويد) of the Qurʾān and the invocations to be found in the daily “Wird” (الورد العام) and other ʿawraḍ such as the Ḥizbu-l-Baḥr, Hizbu-l-Barr, Ḥizbu-sh-Shaykh of the Shādhḍhuli.

In terms of the Wird the invocations, in order, are the ʾIstighfār, aṣ-Ṣalāt ʿala-n-Nabiyy ﷺ, aṣh-Shahādah or Haylalah – lāa ʾillāha ʾilla-Llāh – and the Invocation of the Divine Name – Allāh ﷻ.

‘Sonic Theology’ is a more subtle realm of the tarbiyyahh which, though audible, may not be so easily observable.

It should also be understood that ‘Sonic Theology’ is integral to the obligatory five times daily *ṣalāt* (صلاة), and preferably six with the inclusion of the voluntary *tahajjud* (تهجد) in the middle of the night, as both the recitation of Qurʾān in the *ṣalāt* and the various invocations and Qurʾānic recitations after the *ṣalāt* are an integral part of the *practice* of ‘Sonic Theology’.

One of the significances of the repetitions of the *ṣalāt* and the supplications (*duʿāʾ*/دعاء) and Qurʾānic readings is that the heart is affected by them until it is gradually brought into a state of tranquillity (*ʾiṭmīnān*) and the practioner begins to understand that ritual worship and invocation is in reality the *miʿrāj* of the soul, as he or she begins to ascend into the more suibtle and heavenly realms on the wings of sound and the body movements of the *ṣalāt*.

In the beginnings of this practice the tongue is a teacher and the heart is a learner, but as a result of periods of sustained perseverance in such recitals and repetitions the tongue of the heart begins to speak, and the heart becomes the invoker, and the tongue follows the invocations of the heart. In truth without the invocation in the awakened heart the invocation of the tongue is, in the end, futile.

It should be noted that one of the secrets of repetition and invocation as well as continuing remembrance (*dhikr*) and worship (*‘ibadāt*) is that gradually the tongue of the heart becomes untied and, as we have mentioned, the heart becomes the source of the invocations rather than the tongue.

The sign that the tongue of the heart is speaking is that tiredness, boredom and difficulties in invocation are replaced by lightness, joy, stimulation and pleasure. The tongue of the heart becomes untied to the point that, at times, even when one is sleeping the tongue of the heart is reciting and in waking the tongue does not move until it receives its sign and direction from the heart.

When this presence of heart becomes sustained, acts of worship (*‘ibadāt*), *dhikr*, *‘awrād* and invocations become light and easy; a sign the heart has become the *‘abd* (slave) of Allāh and renounces disobedience, intransigence and hardness, and the *nafs* overcome their own nature until they reach the point mentioned by Allāh ﷻ:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ  
ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً  
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي  
وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

yā ā ayyatuha-n-nafsu-l-muṭama‘innah  
‘irji‘ī ‘ilā rabbiki raḍiyatam-marḍiyyah  
fadākhuli fī ‘ibadī  
wa-dākhuli jannati

Oh you whose self has become tranquil  
return to your Lord pleased and well pleasing  
and enter with my worshippers –  
enter My Garden  
(Sūrah al-Fajr 89:27-30)

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, there is the Blessing of Allāh

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, there is the Mercy of Allāh.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, gloom and grief disappear.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, worries and anxiety vanish.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, *shayṭān* does not enter.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, health abounds.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, there is peace of mind.

Where there is Dhikr of Allāh, there is the satisfaction of the heart.



When ever we remember Allāh,

Allāh remembers us.

When we remember Allāh among the people,

Allāh remembers us among the angels.



أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ

أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

°afaman ṣharaha-llāhu ṣadārahu li-l-°islāmi

fa-huwa °alā nurim-mir-rabbiḥ

fawaylul-li-l-qāsiyati qulūbuhum

min dhikri-llāh : °ulāā°ika fī ḍalālim-mubīn

He whose heart is opened for °Islām by Allāh,

– he is on light from his Lord –

Alas for those who hearts are hardened towards *dhikr* of Allāh.

They are clearly astray.

(Sūrah az-Zumar 39:22)

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ  
أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

°alladhīna °āmanū wa-taṭma°innu qulūbuhum  
bi-dhikri-llāh

°alā bi-dhikri-llāhi taṭma°innu-l-qulūbā

Those who believe and make their hearts tranquil  
by the *dhikr* of Allāh.

Truly by the *dhikr* of Allāh are hearts made tranquil  
(Sūrah ar-Ra°dā 13:28)



Earlier we mentioned the daily “Wird” (الورد العام) practiced in the School of the Shādhḍhuyliyya which includes the °Istighfar, aṣ-Ṣalāt °ala-n-Nabiyy ﷺ, aṣh-Shahādah or Haylalah – *lāā °illāha °illa-Lllāh* – and the Invocation of the Divine Name – Allāh ﷻ.

If we look at the two °āyāts we see that Allāh ﷻ says, (meaning in English): “Alas for those who hearts are hardened towards *dhikr* of Allāh. They are clearly astray.” And, “Those who believe and make their hearts tranquil by the *dhikr* of Allāh. Truly by the *dhikr* of Allāh are hearts made tranquil.”

In both cases Allāh ﷻ is referring generically to the *dhikr* of Allāh.

But what can be also understood here, beyond the more general idea of the *dhikr* of Allāh ﷻ as, for instance, in the *haylalah* or in the repetition of, say, the Beautiful Names of Allāh ﷻ, is the specific reference to the Remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Name of Allāh ﷻ.

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

fa-dhkurūnī °adhkurkum

Remember Me — I remember you!  
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:152)

أَجِيبْ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ

ʾujību daʿwata-d-dāʿi ʾidhā daʿān

I listen to the call of the caller when he calls [Me].

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:186)

By the Name by which a person remembers Allāh, ﷻ so does Allāh ﷻ illuminate the person by that Name. If a person constantly remembers Allāh ﷻ with the name *ar-Raḥman* (The Universally Mercy Full) (الرحمن), gradually that Name begins to permeate and penetrate the heart of that person and he becomes aware of the infinite compassion and affection that permeates all reality. Similarly when the remembrancer (*dhākir*) remembers Allāh ﷻ by His Name The Hearer (*as-samīʿ*/السميع) or The Seer (*al-baṣīr*/البصير) so, in proportion to the extent of his capacity, he begins to hear unheard things and through inspiration begins to see unseen realms and invisible spiritual domains and dimensions.

When the *dhākir* concentrates entirely on the Name of Allāh ﷻ he is blessed with illuminations of the Essence and begins to know and directly sense Allāh ﷻ in all things, all places and at all times.

This does not mean that Allāh ﷻ transmigrates (*hulūl*) into the *dhākir* but, rather, as the sun is reflected in a mirror or water or other transparent things, the Name of Allāh ﷻ is impressed in the heart of the *dhākir* so that at times the *dhākir* is blessed to see that Name shining in the invisible sky of his heart like a brilliant star.

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

wa huwa maʿakum ʾauna ma kuñtum

And He is with you wherever you are.

(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:4)

And this should not be considered at all strange, for we know from the *ḥadīth qudsī* that:

“Nothing contains me but the heart of the believer.”

But to become the *dhākir* of Allāh Most High is not just a matter of repeating a name for a few days. The *dhākir* must fully annihilate his contingent being and freely let go of the attributes of this world (*ad-dunyā*/دُنْيَا), purify the nafs, clean the heart, polish the mirror of the soul and unify one's self ("let thine eye be single and filled with light") in order to acquire eternal life through the intimate light of the Name of Allāh ﷻ.

Again this is where we return to the necessity for tarbiyyahh and, concomitant with that, the absolute necessity of a true teacher (*murabbi*) and perfect guide (*murshid*) to set one on the Way and, even more importantly, to keep one moving on that Way.

Here are some sayings of those who have gone before us ﷺ.

Shaykh ʿAbdu-l-Qādir Jilanī ﷺ makes clear the necessity of a *murshid* in a beautiful metaphor in *al-Fathu-r-Rabbani*. He says: "The heart is the plantation for the Last World (*al-ʾakhirah*/الْآخِرَة). Sow the seeds of ʾImān in your heart. Irrigate, fertilise and mature them with regular good deeds. If there is kindness and energy in the heart it will be fertile and an abundant harvest will result. Should the heart be harsh and contemptuous, the soul becomes infertile and barren and no crop will be able to grow. Learn this art of farming from the farmers who are the ʾawliya karām ﷺ. Do not think your own opinion to be sufficient. Our Prophet ﷺ says, 'Seek help in every field from an expert in that field.'"

He ﷺ also said on this subject in *al-Fathu-r-Rabbani*: "Arrogance, hypocrisy, egoism, are all arrows of *shayṭān* aimed at your hearts. One should formulate a strategy to defend oneself from this attack. The correct strategies are explained and demonstrated by the *shuyūkh*. You should heed their commands and act on them. They will guide you on the path of Allāh ﷻ since they have already travelled on this path. Ask their advice on matters relating to the *nafs*, desires, cravings and other weaknesses, because they have also suffered their consequences and are well aware of the dangers and harms of evil desires. They have battled them over a long period of time and can confront, control, subdue and, finally, defeat them."

°Ashraf °Alī Ṭḥanvī says, “In the sphere of spiritual (*ruḥānī*) training (*tarbiyah*) the shaykh’s concern and affection are similar to a father’s affection in the sphere of worldly training. In fact, the spiritual mentor (*murabbi*) has greater affection than even a father. The spiritual mentor executes tasks that even a father is incapable of rendering. He unites the spirit (*ruh*) of a human being with Allāh ﷻ. He transforms the human being into an ‘*arif* (one who possesses deep knowledge and insight of the spiritual realm) and a *wasil* (one who has attained the goal of Divine measure). Thus, in this holy process of spiritual training the bond between the two parties – murīd and murad– can never be ‘finished’ irrespective of any high degree the association may have attained.”

Mawlanā Rumī ﷺ says:

“No one became anyone by himself. No piece of iron became a sword by itself. No confectioner became a master of the art until he became the student of the sweet maker. Rumī was not Rumī until he became the slave of Shams of Tabrīz.”

In short in this world there is no science or art, trade or business that a human being has acquired without the teaching of another.

It is the envy and the arrogance of the sensual, blind and the dead hearted eternally unfortunate people which keep them from taking the Way to Allāh ﷻ and making the acquaintance of the Guide.

Shayṭān did not prostrate before Sayyidinā °Ādam ﷺ due to his envy and conceit, even though he tried to make his unitarianism an excuse, saying he wouldn’t prostrate before anyone but Allāh ﷻ.

He claimed unitarianism and disowned polytheism but in reality his case was arrogance and egotism.

Ḥadīth Qudsī:

مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ ذَرَّةٌ ۚ مِنَ الْكِبْرِ لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ

man kāna fī qalbihi dharratun mina-l-kibārī

lā yadhuli-l-jannah

He who has an atom of pride in his heart will not enter the Garden.



Bayazid al-Bastamī ؒ once asked Allāh ﷻ “What is the Way to Union?” and heard the reply, “Quit yourself and you will meet Me.”

What is the deep training (*tarbiyah*)?

How to get rid of your self (*nafs*).

Allāh ﷻ bestows honor on the one who bows to another and practices ‘humility’ for the sake of Allāh ﷻ. He who bows down is uplifted. He who is vain falls. The seed germinates only when it has been buried in the earth.

The non-believers at the time of the Prophet ﷺ used to ask,

مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ  
لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

mā li hadḥa-r-rasūli  
yākulu-ṭ-ṭa<sup>°</sup>ama wa yamshī<sup>°</sup>-l-<sup>°</sup>aswaqā  
low lā uñzila ilayhi malakum  
fa-yakūna ma<sup>°</sup>ahu nadḥiran

What is it with this Prophet  
who eats food and walks in the marketplace?

Why hasn’t an angel been sent down with him to give admonition?  
(Sūrah al-Furqan 25:7)

Meaning that somehow the Prophet should be some kind of supernatural, exalted and particularly distinguished being: this was really a cover-up for their egotism, arrogance and envy as they were unable to see the true luminous form of the Prophet ﷺ and so said,

لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ أَوْ نَرَى رَبَّنَا  
low lā <sup>°</sup>uñzila <sup>°</sup>alayna-l-malā<sup>°</sup>ikatu  
<sup>°</sup>ow naraya rabbana

How come we don’t see the angels come down to us  
and why don’t we see our Lord?  
(Sūrah al-Furqan 25:21)

and Allāh ﷻ answered them, saying:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبِسُونَ

wa low ja°alnāhu malakan laja°alnāhu  
rajulañw-wa la-labāsna °alayhim ma yalbisūn

[Even] if We had made an angel, We would have sent him as a man,  
and dressed him as you are dressed.

(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:9)



So it is that our guides, our shuyūkḥ, our murshīds are people like  
us but more along the lines of the response of the Prophet ﷺ:

إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ

°innamā °anā baṣḥarun mithlukum

yūḥaya °ilayya °annamā

ilahukum °ilahun wāḥidā

Truly I am a man like you  
but it has been revealed to me that your G-d is one G-d.

(Sūrah al-Kahf 18:10)

and our shuyūkḥ, the human inheritors (*warathah*) of the Rasūl ﷺ,  
continue to do just that — remind us of the oneness of Allāh and  
train us in the Way of Allāh ﷻ, urging us to board the Ship of  
Safety so that, *inshāā° Allāh*, we may reach the farthest shore.

Our task, as sincere students, is to take the reminder, walk through  
the door and take the hand of the man whose hand is in the hand of  
the man whose hand is in the hand of the Prophet ﷺ so then, like  
bulbs connected to wires running from pole to pole, we will be  
connected to the generator in the powerhouse of love and mercy.

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

yadu-llāhi fowqa °aydīhim

And the Hand of Allāh is above their hands!

(Sūrah al-Faṭḥ 25:7)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

فَإِنْ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

fa-°ini-t-taba°tani fa-lā ras°alni °añ shay°in  
ḥattāa °uḥditha laka minhu ḍhikrā

“If you would follow me, then ask no questions about anything  
until I myself mention it to you.  
(Sūrah-Kahf 18:70)



سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

subḥānaka la °ilma lanā °ilā mā °alimnā  
°innaka °añta-l-°alimu-l-ḥakīm

“Glory to You!  
Of knowledge we have none except what you have taught us.  
You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.  
(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:32)



الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ  
وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

al-ladhīna yadhkurūna-llāha  
qiyāmañw-wa qu°udañw-wa °ala junubihim  
wa yatafakkarūna fī kḥalqi-s-samāwāti wa-l-°arḍ

Those who Remember Allāh  
standing, sitting and lying on their sides  
and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth.  
(Sūrah °Āl-°Imrān 3:191)



وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

wa la-dḥiru-llāhi °akbar

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!  
(Sūrah al-Aṅkabūt 29:45)

ن



noon hierographers  
green mountain  
virginia  
usa